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SUBJECT: MFA OFFICIALS PROVIDE OVERVIEW OF CURRENT AFRICAN ISSUES

REF: A. PARIS 66

1B. JANUARY 21 PARIS POINTS

Classified By: Kathleen Allegrone, Political Minister-Counselor, 1.4 (b) (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: MFA AF A/S Stephane Gompertz and FM Kouchner's Cabinet AF Advisor Charlotte Montel briefed on a range of African issues in separate January 20 meetings. Both were pleased with recent events in Guinea (the non-return of Dadis and other elements of the Ouagadougou Accord) but cautioned that the way forward remained complicated with potential for trouble at many points. On Sudan, Gompertz expressed concern about the North-South problem, focusing on the need to resolve oil issues. On the May 2010 France-Africa Summit, the problem over inviting Sudan's Bashir no longer existed and Gompertz planned to suggest inviting Zimbabwe's Mugabe and Tsvangirai and Kenya's Kibaki and Odinga, to address other potentially difficult "invitation" problems. On Cote d'Ivoire, Gompertz thought that elections could take place in March or April; he predicted a Gbagbo victory. Gompertz hoped that MONUC would continue in some form despite Kabila's desire that it leave. Montel said that expressing support for a continued MONUC presence was FM Kouchner's main priority during his recent visit to the DRC. Kouchner received a warm welcome in Kigali prior to his visit to the DRC; his purpose in Rwanda was to reinforce France's commitment to the recently renewed diplomatic relations between the two sides. His talks in ROC centered on the problem of DRC refugees in the ROC, which ROC President Sassou Nguesso did not want to become a permanent problem. On the Sahel, Gompertz discussed the AQIM problem and the difficulty of bringing prosperity to the northern Sahel without also increasing the number of potential AQIM targets. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) MFA AF A/S-equivalent Stephane Gompertz met with POL/MC and Africa Assistant to discuss a range of issues on January 20. Discussion of Madagascar is reported ref A. Ref B reports President Sarkozy's decision not to attend the upcoming African Union summit (concern over Qadhafi's presence and his attempt to gain a second term as AU president). Later on January 20, FM Kouchner's cabinet Africa Advisor, Charlotte Montel, briefed Africa Assistant on Kouchner's January 7-10 visit to Rwanda, DRC, ROC, and Burkina Faso, a trip in which Montel participated. We intersperse Montel's comments with those of Gompertz as appropriate.

Guinea

13. (C) Gompertz expressed relief that Guinea was finally moving in a more positive direction, with the decision brokered in Ouagadougou for Dadis to remain out of Guinea and for de facto leader Konate to steer Guinea towards free and

fair elections. Gompertz said that a relatively long period of nervous uncertainty had come to an end, and he praised efforts by Morocco and Burkina Faso President Compaore, although he said it was still not clear the degree to which Morocco and Burkina Faso had pre-cooked events prior to Dadis's departure from Morocco. Gompertz also said that Liberian President Sirleaf and UNOWA chief Said Djinnit had apparently played positive behind-the-scenes roles to help broker the deal that eventually emerged. Gompertz said that the choice of Dore as Prime Minister was a good one, as his Forestier ethnic roots could placate Dadis' supporters, particularly among the Forestiers. The other Forces Vives candidate, union leader Diallo, was an ethnic Peul, and naming her as Prime Minister, Gompertz believed, would have exacerbated rather than eased ethnic tensions.

¶4. (C) Gompertz acknowledged that although the major hurdle of keeping Dadis out of Guinea had been overcome, problems remained, including the reaction of Dadis' supporters and allies in Guinea. Gompertz said that many of them would try to cling to the privileges they had obtained when Dadis was in charge. Some also thought they would likely be better protected from the ICC were Dadis still in charge. Kouchner's advisor Montel, while quite pleased with the overall results of the Ouagadougou talks, expressed more pessimism than had Gompertz, underlining the many unresolved tensions in Guinea. She noted the divisions within the Forces Vives, popular mistrust of anyone from the political class, generational differences, and ethnic friction, all of which, in her view, created the potential for trouble even if Dadis were personally no longer in the picture. Questions

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remained about Konate and the CNDD and the broader reaction to the Ouagadougou agreement.

¶5. (C) Montel said that Kouchner's visit to Burkina Faso, at the end of his tour through Rwanda, DRC, and ROC, was focused solely on Guinea. The visit took place before the eventual agreement, so Montel did not spend much time on it, other than to say that Kouchner's Burkinabe interlocutors were fully engaged and said they would do their best to facilitate a positive outcome.

Sudan

¶6. (C) While welcoming recent signs of significant improvement in Chad-Sudan relations (which he hoped would, for once, hold), Gompertz expressed concern about North-South relations and the need to resolve oil-related issues in order to remove a bone of contention threatening an already fragile relationship. Gompertz in fact said that the oil issue was the key to peace between North and South. Gompertz looked forward to meeting with General Gration (and other USG officials) at the upcoming African Union Summit, but he regretted the apparent absence of Russia and China from the summit. Gompertz said that France was trying to engage China, India, and Malaysia -- particularly China -- as the largest consumer of Sudan's oil, into playing a more active role in resolving the North-South oil issue as it would be in their best interests to help find a peaceful solution.

¶7. (C) Concerning the vote to split North and South into two independent countries, Gompertz said that if that were to happen, "so be it," suggesting that we would have to make the most of what could be a very difficult situation. He said that should a split occur, the two sides would have to resolve very quickly, if not in advance, issues such as defining the border, apportioning Sudan's debts, resolving central bank issues, agreeing on what to do about the army and parastatals, and, of course, agreeing on the oil issue. Gompertz did not think that the South would be able to finance an oil pipeline to Kenya and would be obliged to work with the North in order to exploit whatever share of the oil resources it ended up with.

France-Africa

¶ 18. (C) After mentioning Sarkozy's decision not to attend the upcoming AU Summit (ref B), Gompertz said that France was beginning the painful nuts-and-bolts work involved in setting up the May France-Africa Summit, which had been transferred from Egypt because of the issue of inviting Sudan's President Bashir. That would no longer be an issue but other "invitational" issues remained: Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire, Madagascar, Zimbabwe, and Kenya. Hopefully, problems in Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire, and Madagascar would be resolved or closer to resolution by then. On Zimbabwe and Kenya, Gompertz said he was going to propose that Zimbabwe's Mugabe and Tsvangirai and Kenya's Kibaki and Odinga all be invited, in both cases so that the one with the favorable image perceived "good guy" would dilute the presence of the perceived "bad guy." He thought this could be a way to treat this sensitive issue although he repeated that this was not yet GOF policy on how to proceed. He noted that there was always the welcome possibility that Mugabe, for example, would decline an invitation. As an aside, he noted that former Presidential Africa Advisor Romain Serman was working on the summit and was already deeply immersed in finding a suitable venue and working out the many other details the summit would involve.

Cote d'Ivoire

¶ 19. (C) Gompertz, who for a long stretch was one of the few GOF officials convinced elections in Cote d'Ivoire would take place in November 2009 as once scheduled, said that elections now appeared possible in the March/April period. He expressed frustration that yet another issue had emerged (the voter list controversy) that might again delay the vote. In any case, he thought that Gbagbo would win and that the other candidates were too weak.

¶ 10. (C) Kouchner's advisor Montel denied press speculation that Kouchner had canceled a trip to the Cote d'Ivoire because, supposedly, he was being edged out by Presidential

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Chief of Staff Claude Gueant. Montel said this was not the case, that, as the MFA had publicly stated, Kouchner canceled his trip because of the current controversy over the voter list and not because of any intra-GOF in-fighting. Montel pointedly noted that Gueant decided not to visit the Cote d'Ivoire in keeping with a government-wide decision not to send senior envoys so long as the voter list issue remained an obstacle to elections.

DRC

¶ 11. (C) Both Gompertz and Montel commented on the MONUC problem in DRC and the need to work carefully with President Kabila to ensure a continuing MONUC presence. They noted that the international community had already met Kabila halfway by agreeing to a five-month mandate and they agreed that it would be important that MONUC, although perhaps in a revised form, obtain a new mandate after the expiration of the present one. Montel said that MONUC was really the only subject Kouchner addressed during his visit to DRC after his stop in Kigali. Gompertz mused about the possibility of somehow tinkering with MONUC's budget so that more of its financing came from assessed contributions rather than voluntary contributions. He noted that the budget aspects of MONUC had long been a headache for French officials charged with budget discipline. Montel commented that MONUC's presence in 2011 would certainly contribute to a more peaceful environment in which to hold elections scheduled for that year.

Rwanda

112. (C) Montel said that the visit to Kigali was the focal point of Kouchner's trip to Africa, the purpose being to reinforce from the French side France's commitment to the recently restored diplomatic relations between France and Rwanda. Montel said that Kouchner received a warm and sincerely expressed welcome in Kigali and she believed that, while continuing to harbor some suspicions about France, the Rwandans wanted to move forward, reflected in the many courtesies Kouchner and his party received. Montel said that France's new ambassador, Laurent Contini (also a former Kouchner cabinet advisor), was in place and presented his credentials this week.

113. (C) Montel said that relations resumed even though the Rwandans understood that the warrants issued by then-judge Bruguiere in 2006, which caused the rupture, were still in place. But they were somewhat relieved when Rose Kabuye's judicial examination ended and she was released. This showed a better Rwandan understanding of French judicial independence and perhaps Rwandan confidence that French courts were not "out to get" those named in Bruguiere's report.

114. (C) The Rwandans may have also heeded one bit of advice the French had been offering since Sarkozy came into office, Montel said. The French had been telling Rwanda that with Kouchner -- a legend in the NGO and humanitarian relief world -- as Foreign Minister, and with Sarkozy -- who had pledged that France would no longer be a prisoner of its colonial past and who himself was not implicated in "France-Afrique" as had been his predecessors -- as President, Rwanda would never have leadership in France so sympathetic and willing to take Rwandan views into account. Montel speculated that with all the talk (albeit not necessarily true) about Kouchner's reaching the final stages of his term in office, the Rwandans might have decided that they should act now to normalize rather than wait for a change in French leadership that might be indifferent or even hostile to Rwanda's situation.

ROC

115. (C) Kouchner went to Brazzaville after DRC. Montel said the visit was in the nature of a courtesy call inasmuch as Kouchner had been several times to Rwanda and DRC as FM but had not stopped in Brazzaville. His talks with President Sassou Nguesso centered on the problem of DRC refugees who had recently flooded into ROC. Montel said that Sassou Nguesso's main point was that he did not want these refugees to become a "permanent" fixture and he therefore opposed the construction of what might be construed as permanent camps or the establishment of a formal relief operation. Montel

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indicated that Kouchner understood but reminded of the need to give proper treatment to the refugees.

Sahel/AQIM

116. (C) Gompertz commented briefly on the security situation in the Sahel and the continuing problem of kidnappings. He lamented that efforts to improve the northern regions of the Sahel, through projects to improve tourism, were self-defeating because tourism, for example, only provided more targets for the kidnapper. He said that sending development experts to the region involved similar concerns. He welcomed continued cooperation with the U.S. on Sahel-related issues.

Benin

¶17. (C) In passing, Gompertz lauded Benin as a relative success story but he said he was not involved in the visit to Benin being planned for Carla Bruni, President Sarkozy's wife.

RIVKIN